(c) Major importers of steel during 1997-98 included Ispat Industries, Uttam Steels Ltd., Jindal Iron & Steel, Bajaj Auto, Maruti Ltd., STEELCO Gujarat, Mahindra & Mahindra, TELCO, Raymond Steels, Nagarjuna Steels, and others.

(d) Steel was imported mainly from the following countries in the recent past:

CIS, Germany, Japan, France; U.K.; Belgium, USA, South Africa, Iran Holland, Slovak Rep., Spain, etc.

Research and development in the Steel Sector

2146. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) the amount earmarked on research and Development in the Steel sector during Ninth Plan;

(b) whether enough attention is not being paid in research and development (R&D);

(c) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the steps taken to lay proper emphasis in that area?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND THE MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) to (d) The steel units in public sector and some units in private sector usually provide funds for their R&D programmes. However, in order to give boost to R&D efforts in the steel sector, Government have also approved an allocation of Rs. 150 crores per annum to be financed through Steel Development Fund (SDF).

Increase in prices of SAIL

2147. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Steel prices have been increased;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) its impact on production and demand?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND THE MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) to (c) SAIL has increased the listed prices in certain categories of mild steel products w.e.f. 01/07/1997. While effecting the price increase, factors such as overall market scenario, competitors prices, landed cost of imports, cost of production etc. have been taken into account. Therefore, there has been no significant impact on production and demand.

Revival plan of Indian Iron and Steel Company Limited

2148. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) since when the Indian Iron and Steel Company Limited is sick;

(b) the cumulative losses suffered by it;

(c) whether there is any proposal to revive the plant; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND THE MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) Indian Iron and Steel Co. Ltd. (IISCO) was declared a sick industrial company by the Board of Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR) on 17th August, 1994.

(b) The cumulative loss of IISCO as on 31/03/1997 is Rs. 1159 crore (provisional).

(c) and (d) Steel Authority of India Limited have submitted a proposal to revive IISCO in a joint venture partnership with M/s Tvazhpromexport (TPE) of Russia. This proposal is dependent on the use of Rupee